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[P.136]

105 they occupy a temperate to cold environment, which offers rich rewards to a farming people but which otherwise possesses relatively meager resources. In prehistoric times the Tarascans were able to utilize the present area as a base to develop a modest empire. In historic times, their empire gone, they still have maintained a degree of individuality in the face of an encroaching modern civilization.

## TECHNOLOGY

222 for the manufacture of brushes. The entire
412 family may work at this task. While some collecting of *raiz de paja* still is carried on, the market collapsed badly with the outbreak of war in 1939, depriving a number of families of an important part of their livelihood. In good times, the roots sold at 30 to 35 centavos a kilo.[3]

222 A root, čalankóte, is used for washing wool-
388 ens and is considered superior to soap.[4] It is dug in the barrancas, both for use and for sale. In Angáhuan, Rendón found seeds of a bush called kómerame used for the same purpose, as well as leaves called apúpen and roots of the plant pačánkua.

*Honey gathering.*—The one collecting tech-
222 nique still important in Cherán is gathering
237 wild honey. Not only are there still specialists who spend many weeks at the occupation during proper seasons of the year, but there are numerous ceremonial associations. The *panaleros* or honey collectors are divided into two
● [176] groups, each with an image and a *mayordomía* of San Anselmo, patron saint of the group. There are also important ceremonial activities on the part of the *panaleros* in connection with the fiesta of Corpus Christi in June. The various ceremonies are described later.

Most gathering of wild honey takes place in the regions of old lava flows or *malpais*. The *malpaises* of Turicuaro and Tanaco are considered among the best today for honey gather-

[3] In La Cañada, wild gourds, *guajes* (arumbas), are collected and sold in the Chilchota market. The leaf of a wild bay (?), *baya* (hóngakua), is used in washing clothes by La Cañada Tarascans, who claim the plant is eaten by the Sierra Tarascans. Soaproot, *amole*, is used in La Cañada for bathing.

[4] The orthography used for native words is that recommended by *Proyecto Tarasco* and the *Consejo de Lenguas Indígenas* (Swadesh, 1940).

[104]

1:Beals E-5 (1940-1941)1946 NU34 Tarasco NU34
[p.1316] Sierra Tarascans

438 pottery and the goods on sale are made at the
323 same pottery-making villages that supply the other markets.

The fiesta at Cheranástico for the Assump-
796 tion of the Virgin is considered a large and important one. Services are held in the church at Cherán on this day, and the date is also observed as a fast day by many Mestizos, in Uruapan, for example.

At Capacuaro the patron saint is San Mateo. Small jars of atole are offered for sale and are purchased, together with the containers, as offerings to the saint. At Capacuaro it is said
[314] that copal smoke is the food of God and that when He eats He smells the smoke. For this reason, it is said, the priests wave the censers when copal is burning.

The only town visited where no fiestas or
796 *moyordomías* are celebrated is Urupichio. All
184 the fiestas in this town had formerly been given by *cargueros* or *mayordomos*. People took their duties so seriously that many sold their lands in order to give the *mayordomías* properly. As a result, a few wealthy people came to own all the land. When the revolution came, the town became a supporter of Zapata and later an agrarian town. After the revolution the lands were seized and divided up and the *mayordomías* and fiestas were abolished. The church, which was burned down during the revolution along with the rest of the village, has never been rebuilt. Instead of a religious
527 fiesta, Independence Day, September 16, is celebrated with bands and a *castillo*. The town is planning to have its own band. What the effects of this will be cannot be determined, but if the band is hired out to play at fiestas in other towns it may serve as the entering wedge for reviving the fiestas.

Data on the fiestas of a Mestizo town, Chilchota, are given in Appendix 2. They afford interesting comparative material.

## MAYORDOMÍA ORGANIZATION AND THE CULT OF THE SAINTS

796 Approximately 13 saints exist in Cherán
776 which belong to groups only indirectly or not at all connected with the church. Each of these saints is in charge of an individual known as a *carguero* or *mayordomo* during a year or more and is associated with special procedures

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and ceremonies. The ceremonies of the saints are sometimes called *mayordomías* as they are elsewhere in Mexico, although the term *cargo* is more common in Cherán. The elaborateness and expense of the ceremonies vary considerably. Some are virtually community functions or minor fiestas but held at the expense of the *carguero* or *mayordomo*. Others have very little expense attached to them. In many cases dance groups are associated with the *mayordomía*.

So far as could be learned, six of the saints and accompanying *mayordomías* "belong" to the *cabildo*. Four others are associated with particular professions (this is also true of some of the saints of the *cabildo*) and are "managed" by principals (*principales*). Another is managed by a group of principals but is not associated with a profession, while the final saint identified is owned by a private family. The saints belonging to the *cabildo* are San Isidro (of the farmers), San José (of the forest workers), Santa Inéz (of the cattle raisers), Santa Nieves or the Virgin of Snows, the Virgin of Guadalupe, and the Santo Niño or the Child Christ. Saints belonging to professions are San Antonio (of the *arrieros* or muleteers), San Rafael (of the merchants), San Anselmo (of the honey gatherers, with two separate images and ceremonies), and Santa Cecilia (of the musicians). Independent of any profession is the *mayordomía* of the Three Kings or Tres Reyes. The privately owned saint has no *mayordomía* properly speaking and is usually spoken of simply as the Miraculous Saint.

The *cabildo* is also known as the "ačes," meaning principal persons or things. In Spanish the *cabildo* is also known as the *principales*. The group consists of men who have occupied the offices of *colector* and *prioste* associated with the church. In the past the *cabildo* looked after many things connected with the church, including the collection and care of the tithes or gifts to the priest, cared for the saints in the church and the ornaments and decorations of the church, and brought the priests to Cherán during the period when religious functions were prohibited. Members also had charge of the *mayordomías* mentioned above, and considered the saints their property.

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796 item of expense also. A midnight Mass and candles are paid for, as well as the dance instructor. Special foods are also prepared at this time, for example, *mole de pepita de calabaza molida*, mole of ground squash seeds, a very rich food prepared only on this occasion (see recipes, p. 53).

### MAYORDOMÍA OF SANTA NIEVES

[776] Santa Nieves, or the Virgin de las Nieves (Virgin of the Snows), was evidently once the Virgin associated with the hospital. The *carguero* in 1940, as was the case with the *carguero* of the Child Christ, had taken the post "for pleasure."

The *carguero* receives the saint August 5. He takes it to his home and places it in a specially prepared place. On the day of the saint, August 5, he is supposed to arrange a dance, the caballita uarárica, dance of the little horses, and to provide a band. This was not done in 1940 because of the quarrel over the *cabildo*. The dancers perform on this one day only, visiting the houses of the *cabildo*. The *carguero* pays for a Mass in church to which he takes the image of the saint. The image is left in church for the new *carguero*.

### MAYORDOMÍA OF GUADALUPE

The *mayordomía* of the Virgin of Guadalupe on December 12 is also a fiesta of the *cabildo*. The *carguero* gives food to his relatives in his house and they help him to decorate the church. The image of the Virgin is taken to church for the Mass and is left there for the new *carguero*. A long Mass is held. In 1940 there were three priests and the cost was $60. Eighteen large candles were provided, each with bows of red, green, and white made out of tin (because of a shortage, four candles had paper ornaments). The candles are carried to church in procession by the helpers (relatives) of the *carguero*. Behind is carried the Virgin's image, followed by the *carguero* and his wife. A dance is supposed to be held, but it was omitted in 1940.

### MAYORDOMÍA OF SAN ISIDRO

The *mayordomía* of San Isidro is also connected with the *cabildo*. The date of the *mayordomía* is May 15. Information of this *mayordomía* was obtained from the *carguero's*

796 wife, who was very suspicious and possibly ignorant. Consequently it is not wholly satisfactory.

[776] The saint is the patron of those who cultivate the ground with oxen, but there is no evidence that only cultivators assume this *mayordomía*. The *carguero* pays for a Mass and probably for candles. Usually the relatives of the *carguero* and his wife are invited to eat at the house, but this is not obligatory and may be omitted if the *carguero* cannot afford it (the *carguero* in 1940 was obviously very poor). If the relatives are invited, the wife's female relatives aid in preparing the food. The saint's image is taken to church before the Mass and remains in church until the fiesta of Corpus, when it is removed by the new *carguero*. The *carguero* in 1940 had taken the saint because of a vow, but the wife said she did not know what the vow was. [i.e., San Isidro.—Analyst]

MAYORDOMÍA OF SAN JOSÉ

[776] San José is a patron of the shake makers and the plank makers. The *carguero* is usually of one of these occupations. He begins his service on the saint's day, March 19. At the fiesta of Corpus he takes the image to church and pays for candles. He also provides meals for the commissioners and musicians of the woodworkers at the fiesta (for the entire fiesta according to one informant, but this contradicts other information given in connection with the Corpus fiesta). In the following year on March 19 the *carguero* pays for a Mass, candles, and *cohetes*, taking the saint's image to the church where it is left for the new *carguero*. On the 19th, if the *carguero* wishes, he may invite his relatives to the house for food and have music, but this it not obligatory.

MAYORDOMÍA OF SANTA INÉZ

[776] Santa Inéz, also a saint of the *cabildo*, is regarded as one of the virgins. She is patron of cattle and pigs. Formerly there were cows belonging to this saint, but they were lost. About 15 years ago a cow was presented to the saint. Now she possesses two cows, two bulls, and two young steers. The *carguero* looks after these animals. He may use the milk from the cows, but he is not supposed to sell any of the cattle.

796 The saint's image in this case was kept with
778 special elegance in a large case with glass on the front and sides. Inside the box were small images of a cow, a steer, and a pig on the left side. The box stood on a table decorated with paper flowers and supporting an incense burner, a basket of copal gum, and a candle. The table in turn rested on a mat on the floor. The wall behind the box was decorated with colored papers and chains and paper cut-outs.

796 The new *carguero* receives the image of the saint on April 21. On Corpus the image is taken to church (and probably candles are burned). At the end of the year, on the following April 21, the relatives of the *carguero* visit him. He has musicians and food for them. The saint's image is taken to church for a Mass paid for by the *carguero* (probably with candles). Some *carguero*s, when they receive the image, give it a new outfit of clothing. The image is large and one of the best-
[778] dressed in Cherán. The dress is white with a blue cape. A gilt crown is on the head and a necklace of the red glass beads prized by Tarascan women is about the neck. The altar is decorated with many flowers and aromatic herbs. [i.e., Santa Inéz - Analyst]

## MAYORDOMÍA OF SAN RAFAEL

The *mayordomía* of San Rafael is not connected with the *cabildo*. The saint is patron of the merchants, and apparently the *mayordomía* is administered by a principal or principals selected by the merchants. The principals decide who shall receive the *mayordomía* and pay an occasional visit to the *carguero's* house to see that all is kept in proper order. This seems to be the regular arrangement for all the independent saints connected with *mayordomías*, although specific information is lacking for some of them.

[778] As patron of the merchants, the image of San Rafael carries a fish under the left arm
[776] and in his right hand bears a staff (actually a shepherd's crook). About his neck is a necklace of sea shells. In front of the altar are hung other sea shells and miniature fire fans, clay fruits, etc. The house and altar are well decorated with paper flowers and colored papers. Before the altar are candles and an incense burner. The merchants visit the

1:Beals E-5 (1940-1941)1946 NU34 Tarasco NU34


796 saint's image and burn a candle before setting out on a journey.

The new *carguero* takes charge of the image the day before Corpus. He goes to the house of the old *carguero*, secures the image, and takes it to church. There it remains in a "box" during the week-long festivities of Corpus. On Monday afternoon of Corpus the musicians of the merchants come to the house of the *carguero* and make it their headquarters during the fiesta until Saturday noon. The musicians, the commissioners, and whatever people attach themselves to the group, breakfast and dine at the house of the *carguero* during the fiesta. If he cannot afford this, the commissioners provide the meals, three or four cooperating in providing each meal. The musicians of this group also greet the honey gatherers when they return from their stay in the woods collecting honeycombs for the fiesta (on Friday, according to the *carguero;* Tuesday, according to all others).

The day of the saint is October 24. The *carguero* pays for a Mass (and presumably candles). In 1940 the Mass was delayed because the priest was too busy and was out of town frequently.

The *carguero* ordinarily is a merchant, but in 1940 he was a fireworks maker. Because he traveled from town to town, the principals had decided he could qualify as *carguero* when he asked for the *mayordomía*. The *carguero* sought the responsibility "for pleasure" and not because of any vow. Incidentally, he is a [191] native of Pichataro and speaks very little Spanish. His wife speaks even less. Perhaps because of this origin they were much the most open and cordial of the *cargueros*.[87]

### MAYORDOMÍA OF SAN ANTONIO

[776] San Antonio is patron of the muleteers, the *arrieros*. The new *carguero* receives the image on June 13, the day of the saint, and takes it to

[87] Those desiring the *mayordomía* of San Rafael apply to the principal. The holder of this office in 1940 had occupied it for 18 years, although he had several times tried to resign. Occasionally he calls meetings of the merchants to discuss some expense relative to the saint, such as new garments or altar table. Sometimes money is collected in the meeting in advance for such expenditures. On other occasions the principal spends money out of his pocket and takes up a collection at the meeting to reimburse himself. According to this principal, the new *carguero* goes to the priest during Corpus for benediction. Probably this is true of the other *mayordomías* but the point was not investigated.

1:Beals E-5 (1940-1941)1946 NU34 Tarasco NU34
[p.142b] Sierra Tarascans

shortly before the close of the study. (It is quite probable that two or three *mayordomías* exist in Cherán which were not discovered at all; no one in the town appears to know all of them.) Santa Cecilia is patroness of the musicians, and the *carguero* is always a musician. In 1940 no one wished to "take the saint," so the image remained in the same house, a nephew of the former *carguero* who lived in the house taking the responsibility. The musicians all gather at the house of the *carguero* and play all day. (This is how the *mayordomía* was discovered; however, no outsiders were invited in, despite the most obvious hints.)

### THE MIRACULOUS HOLY CHILD

This saint, El Milagroso Santo Niño, is not properly to be included among the *mayordomías*, as it is the property of a single family and does not circulate among other households. According to the story told by the owners, the saint was found by the man of the family some 18 years before, while he was cutting wheat below the town. Tiring, he sat down, and while picking idly at the dirt with his sickle he uncovered the image. He had the image fixed up (at present it looks entirely like the other saint's images with respect to the technique and painting). With the aid of others, a chapel was then built for the saint in the yard of the house. When the image was found it was only about 30 cm. high. It is claimed that it has grown steadily until it is now between 70 and 80 cm.

The saint first became known as a miraculous saint when a man from the ranchos (a group of small Mestizo settlements on the boundaries of Cherán in the mountains) cut his foot while alone in the woods. As he was bleeding to death, he recalled the saint, of which he had heard, and vowed to take it to his rancho accompanied by dancers. The bleeding stopped and he recovered.

Keeping his vow, the Mestizo brought dancers to Cherán and took the saint to the rancho. There other miracles occurred. For example, a child who could not walk and who was dumb had the crown of the saint put on him; he now walks and talks very well.

As a result of these experiences, the people

1:Beals E-5 (1940-1941)1946 NU34 Tarasco NU34
[p.143a]


796 from the ranchos came every year with dancers.
796 They spent 3 days in Cherán, dancing in the church and in the municipal building. Then they took the saint to the ranchos and it often was kept there many months. In 1940 the owners decided not to let the saint go any more because they wished to have it with them "as we have lost much time with it."

## COMPARATIVE NOTES

796 Material collected from other towns suggests
794 that other types of *mayordomía* organization exist. In Angáhuan, Rendón found an elaborate hierarchy of officials, evidently corresponding to the *cabildo* and the associated organization at Cherán. In Angáhuan, according to Rendón, the officials are ranked as follows: *Alcalde, regidor,* kámbiti, petájpe and biskál, *mayores,* kiéŋi, anyítakua.

In addition, there is a group of elderly men, corresponding to the Cherán *cabildo,* who are known as *tarénpenya.* These are men who have served the above offices or part of them.

The *alcalde* and *regidor* correspond to the *prioste-colector* positions in Cherán apparently. The *alcalde* is in charge of the church for 1 year. During this time he has to hold six fiestas. The first is at New Year's, when he receives his post and when he must provide food and *aguardiente.* The second is carnival, when he is aided in the expenses by the *"cabildo"* (it is not clear from Rendón's notes whether this means the same as it does in Cherán). The third is the day of the Holy Cross when he must pay for two bands and there is the dance of the moors and soldiers. The *alcalde* provides food for the dancers. The latter dance in the houses of various functionaries. The fourth fiesta is Corpus, at which time all the members of the different occupations take miniatures of their products and dance with them before the church and also perform their offices. The fifth fiesta is that of Santiago (the patron saint), when there is music, dancers, and also bull riding. For this fiesta the *alcalde* pays for the Masses and gives food to the dancers. The final fiesta is the day on which the *alcalde* is chosen by the elders.

The *regidor* is the helper of the *alcalde* and aids him in every way possible. The relatives of the *alcalde* also assist him with food.

754 refused to tell some part; probably omissions were made in the others as well. It is also clear that with almost no exception, the witchcraft is wholly European in origin. This is true of both the data from Cherán and from Capacuaro. Despite the fragmentary data from Cherán, a number of correspondences with the Capacuaro data are evident. For example, Agustín mentioned only snake oil for the immunization to witchcraft. Capacuaro data show snake oil as well as other items. While the data are too [831] scanty to afford generalizations, erotic interests and anxieties are suggested much more strongly by the Capacuaro witchcraft data than by data secured from any other source.

In Mestizo Chilchota exists belief in witches [763] disguised as owls. The owls call for the death of their victim, and death takes the call of the owl as a signal. Such owls cannot be killed by bullets or rocks, which simply pass through the bird without making it even change its place. The only manner in which such an owl may be driven away is for a woman not wearing underwear to throw her skirts over her head in front of it; at this the owl flees and never returns to the house.

## MISCELLANEOUS BELIEFS

776 Relatively few superstitions and beliefs in the supernatural outside of the various aspects, 151 of Christianity and witchcraft were encountered in Cherán. Most common, apparently, is the belief in the miríŋgua, a malevolent spirit which, according to some, lives in the *barrio* of Parícutin. At night, in the fields, woods, or in the town itself, a person will think he is going a certain way and will recognize various places, and then, if the experience is a mild one, he finds suddenly that he is in some place quite different. Or the person may be carried off by the miríŋgua. The most common place about town for the miríŋgua to ambush its victims is in the *barranca* between Parícutin and the rest of the town.

One young man of 25 years recounted his experience to Rendón as follows: One dusk he was returning from the fields to his house and thought he was following the proper road but he felt very unusual (in a manner he was unable to explain because of his faulty Spanish). Finally he felt that someone pulled on him

776 151 without his being able to see who it was. Then he became frightened and ran toward his house (as he thought), but instead he ran faster and faster in the opposite direction. Eventually he became terrorized and ran, falling and bumping into things, for it was getting increasingly darker, until he arrived at a place he did not recognize. He ran through many nettles which struck him like pack straps, drawing blood all over his body. Finally he found a cave and took refuge in it, where he struggled all night with something that tried to strangle him. He was found in the morning by a search party which had been hunting him all night. He was 17 when this occurred.

On another occasion a woman was found dead in a sand cave without any tracks except her own footprints. She showed all the signs of strangulation. Before her death this woman had told her relatives and friends that frequently she would think she was on her way home and would find herself in the *barranca*. She would sit down awhile and make the sign of the cross and pray. With this, things would become clear to her and she could retrace her road.

A youth returning from his field to his house, felt something pull him strongly toward the *barranca* as he crossed the bridge. He resisted, and then it seemed to him he was going toward home when suddenly he lost his footing and began to fall in space. As he fell he had the impression he was entering his house. He was found next day in the *barranca*, half dead, and was unable to speak for 8 days. He stammers still as the result of his fright.

Another story tells of a man who had attended a wedding in Paricutin. After the wedding the group went through the streets with the music, dancing and drinking. As they crossed the bridge to Paricutin the man said something was pulling at him. He began to gesticulate as if he was fighting something, but his friends, having drunk a great deal, paid no attention. He began to run but fell from the bridge. His body was found down the *barranca* (as the water evidently was high) after considerable search.

776 This spirit is known at Capacuaro as mirinyin, mirinchin, or miringin. The spirit appears

1:Beals E-5 (1940-1941)1946 NU34 Tarasco NU34
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776 sometimes as a *bulto* (indistinct form) which whistles to people and gets them to follow it until they are lost in the woods. One informant, named Juan, said he had been seized in the Cerro del Aire and was able to escape only by recommending himself to the patron saint, San Juan. Otherwise he would have fallen in a cave where the devil could have seized him.

[556] In Urén in La Cañada it is said that the miriŋgua appears where money has been hidden. If someone gets rich suddenly it is said that "he has encountered the miriŋgua." The miriŋgua is also said to appear in the shape of dog or cat, but these are really disguised witches.

356 When houses are repaired or reconditioned, it is customary to hang up flowers, usually fastening the flowers to strings which are looped over doorways and windows. The practice was said to be customary and no beliefs concerning it could be discovered.

782 789 When the rains are late in coming in May, the image of one of the saints is taken to the top of the Sierra San Marcos, south of town. There the image is raised up and down several times and *cohetes* are fired. Even sceptics admit it usually rains soon after this; some of the naive attribute the rain to the *cohetes*, others to the proximity of the rainy season.

821 When the mountain of Pilón, east of town, has mist on top, it is going to rain, say many. The early rains come from the direction of Pilón, the later from the direction of San Marcos.

787 825 If people are seated and a dog comes and howls, some misfortune may befall the people. The coyote has magical power over animals. If he just gives himself a shake, the chickens will walk over to him and let themselves be eaten.

A person who finds a dead deer in the mountains which he has not killed will have some misfortune befall his family. A son, brother, parent, etc., will certainly die, and there is no way of averting the misfortune.

If a coyote crosses the road in front of one, it is a sign some misfortune will occur.

A blue-bellied lizard found occasionally in Cherán is believed to be able to jump on a person's back without his knowing it and burrow inside. It leaves a blue lizard mark on the

175 623 formed a council of elders who controlled community affairs and the nomination of new officers.[15]

175 171 621 This is the system which seems to be typical of Indian-Spanish towns in Middle and South America.[16] It has been best characterized by Tax for Guatemala,[17] where secular and religious officials are arranged in a hierarchical sequence through which every man is supposed to pass. Those who have thus fulfilled their duties toward the community enter the category of elders and form a council which holds power and controls the giving of offices.

A basic trait in the political system of the Indian village community was the close interrelation of the religious and secular aspects of town organization by having civil officers perform some religious function or by considering certain religious offices prerequisite for the civil.

175 771 Native religion before the Spanish conquest was based on a number of gods representing the different natural elements, economic activities, and the social groups formed by kinship and the division of labor (clans, trades, towns, etc.). After the

175 797 [776] Spanish conquest, Catholicism was forced on the Indians and a Catholic priesthood replaced the native one. A syncretism of the Indian gods with similar Catholic saints occurred. This replacement or fusion of Indian gods with Catholic saints and also the preservation of pagan festivals by devoting them to the saints were acknowledged and even fostered by the Spanish missionaries.

175 794 Every Indian community was provided with a church, a priest, and a sexton. There were also two or three chanters and two *fiscales*, old men in charge of calling the Indians to religious services and instruction.[18]

175 796 Very important in this new religion were the festivals connected with the yearly cycle of Catholic ritual. They were organized by devout individuals who took care of a particular festival and assisted the priest. Civil officers also participated.

178 771 Part of the native religion not related to the Church rituals survived, because of the considerable community autonomy, mainly as private ceremonies or superstitions relating to technological or life cycle activities (sickness, for instance).

These aspects of unorganized religion

15. Chávez Orozco, 1943, Chapter 2.
16. For Peru, see Mishkin, 1946, 443-448.
17. Tax, 1937, especially 443-444. The question of land tenure, however, is not discussed. For this point, see Wagley, 1941, 30-36.
18. Haring, 1947, 174.

2:Carrasco E-4, 5 (1945)1952
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779 Changes in this folk Catholicism are traceable to the influence of the economic and social changes previously discussed. In this chapter the cult, its organization, financing and relation to the government and to political conflict will be discussed, while religious ideology will be dealt with in the following chapter.

The most profound changes in the folk religion affect mainly the cult organization. The basic traits of the folk cult itself have not been greatly modified during the period covered in this paper, and are similar to those generally found in all Middle America. A description of them will provide a background on which to discuss them.

## Main Traits of Tarascan Folk Religion and Cult[1]

776 Tarascan folk Catholicism, although accepting the Christian God (Tarascan, *Kuerájpiri*, Creator; Spanish, *Padre Eterno*, Eternal Father) as the supreme creator, revolves primarily around the saints. The saints are sons of God, also those who followed Christ when he came to earth, and in general people who lived sometime in the past and 'won sanctity'. A male saint is called in Tarascan *tata* diósa, literally 'father or lord god', a term which also can be applied to the Creator. Female saints are called *nana iuísa*, 'mother or lady virgin', which means both the Virgin or any female saint. The mystery of the Trinity is not well known to the Tarascans. Christ is only the most important tata diósa. Sometimes he can be considered the same as God, but most often he is only his son. In some myths he is the brother of other saints like Saint James or even a brother of the Devil. Also it is not clear whether the various Christs venerated in different places are really the same God. The Christs of San Juan, Tingambato, Sopoco and Santa Fe, for instance, are said to be four brothers. Similarly the different local Virgins are to be considered as many different supernaturals.

776 As important as the supernatural being, 778 is its image kept in a church or chapel. It

1. Most information comes from the late nineteenth century and the present time. Information for the eighteenth century is scantier, but so far as available it shows great similarity with later times, so the following description, although written in the present tense, can be taken to apply in its basic traits to that period also.

2:Carrasco E-4, 5 (1945)1952
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776 is considered sometimes as the residence of the saint, his abode being also in heaven,
778 but in many cases the image seems to take over all concepts of the supernatural and instead of a symbol it becomes the saint itself. Folklore is rich in tales about the apparition of images as synonymous with the saint. The images often appear to behave like a person. In different accounts they are believed to move, weep, or speak. If the saint leaves the church to wander, traces of its journey are seen on the image. People also treat the image as a person. Presents taken to it are often dresses. The image can be taken out when there has been no rain so that he (she) can see for himself the need for it, or, in cases of witchcraft, he may be imprisoned in a little jail until help is received.

776 Most saints are related to the social groups of which they are patrons. Thus the Virgin of Guadalupe stands for Mexico. All towns and their wards *(barrios)* and also the trades have a patrón and the cult of one such group is specially concerned with its patron who is its supernatural protector and representative.

In legends, saints can appear as those who give the villages their characteristic trades. There can be said to be a division of labor among the saints, each one attending to different localities or human activities or personifying natural elements.

Supernatural help is asked from the patron of one's own group or from the saint which deals particularly with what one wants to obtain. For instance, the Virgen de la Salud of Pátzcuaro is helpful in case of sickness; Saint Anthony is good to ask for offspring. In addition, most popular saints are petitioned for all kinds of things. The reputation of the saint and personal devotion decide which should be asked. Most famous in the Tarascan region are the Christs of San Juan, Carácuaro and Araró, the Virgin of Guadalupe, Virgen de la Salud of Pátzcuaro, the Señor del Resgate (an Ecce Homo) of Tzintzuntzan, Saint Anthony of Morelia, and many others.

Sometimes new saints appear, which in a short time become very popular, while some others decline in importance. For this reason the most important saint of a town is in some cases not its patron saint. For instance the Christs of Parangaricutiro, Tingambato, Zopoco, Santa Fe and the Señor del Resgate in Tzintzuntzan have all superseded in importance the patron saints of those places.

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him back. When the master found out what had happened, however, he forgave her before she had redeemed her debt and she was able to go to heaven.

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An outline of the nature of the saints and of the main features of their cult has been given before. Most tales about the saints refer to apparitions and miracles.

The saint's image appears to some person who sees, hears, or dreams of it and calls the attention of the people. Often it is a shapeless piece of wood or stone in which someone imagines he sees a saint, usually Christ or a Virgin of Guadalupe. There are a number of such Guadalupes which usually draw only the personal devotion of the discoverer although sometimes more people bring flowers and candles to the stone. The apparitions of some famous saints are told in this same way. The saints, having gained recognition because of some miracle, are taken to the town's church, where later they are shaped into well formed images. Stones are interpreted as Virgins while Christs appear as pieces of wood which bleed when struck by an axe.

Saints occasionally wander on earth. The Virgin of Cocucho goes to Ocumicho after Saint Peter. Saint James in Azajo used to leave the church during the Revolution in order to fight. Saint Peter in Jarácuaro left the town when the people were split politically and the church was closed, and experiences are told of how he was seen in the hills or how he was seen on his way to Tarejero where he went.

Tales about the activities of the saints refer mostly to their miracles, rewarding the good and punishing the evil. In answer to a vow offered by the devout, the saint can perform a miracle granting what was asked of him. Some of these miracles become elaborate stories like that of the man condemned to death by the agraristas and saved by Saint Peter. Or in the following two stories, saints saved the cargueros who had pledged their souls to the Devil in order to obtain money with which to make the festival:

"Once there was a lazy man. He had taken a cargo and the fiesta was coming closer and his wife said to him, 'Our fiesta day is coming and if you don't get busy, with what money are we going to make the fiesta? Well, how are we going to do it then?' 'Well,' he said, 'tomorrow I'll go out and see what I can find.' The

539 'The first job you will have to do is to go fetch wood. Put these sandals on. When you wear them out you are free.' And the sandals were made of iron. He left very thoughtful and on his way he met a bearded man who asked him where he was going. The man told him the whole story. Asked the bearded one, 'Well, have you repented? Take the sandals off and go to the wood and when you come back I will give them back to you already worn out.' This bearded man must have been God; He made a miracle for him and He gave him the sandals all thin, so that man could get out very soon.

"The people in that place where they were grinding were the souls of the dead and they were as in hell or purgatory."

[776] In other miracles, God or the saints punish bad actions, mainly failure to comply promptly with the cult requirements. Nonfulfillment of a vow brings about an accident, caused by the saint as punishment. For example:

A man was going in pilgrimage to San Juan Parangaricutiro when he thought he had better go to Tingambato. He fell over a ravine with his donkeys and died shortly thereafter.

A woman was going to visit the Christ in Carácuaro when she felt tired and sat down and regretted having started the trip. She became enchanted in a nearby hill.

Another woman in a similar predicament became a stone when she complained of the trip. Dancers who perform before reaching the saint also become stone.

776 Other miracles punish sacrilegious actions of the sinners. For instance, a revolutionary colonel tried to chop off the head of the image of the Christ of Carácuaro. It bled and the colonel repented, but he became sick and suffered without being able to die until he asked for pardon.

Lack of concern for the saints is also punished. A man obtained wealth from Saint Anthony, but lost it when he forgot about the saint. Another man could not enter heaven because he found no saint to sponsor him, as he had no devotion.

* * *

In opposition to God and the saints, the Devil appears as the bad supernatural and advocate of bad behavior. The creation of the Devil has been mentioned before.

The Devil appears together with a host of demons of which he is king. These demons seem to be those given to him by God when he was created, the doomed souls. The pre-Christian people (k'uaŋári)

776 and some natural elements also are called demons. As there is only one word (*no-ambákiti*, evil one) both for the Devil and the demons, it is used sometimes as if the Devil were omnipresent, and at other times as if there were many different demons.

776 778 [772] The Devil inhabits hell under the earth where he rules over the doomed dead. He also attends "ugly" places—woods, caves, ravines, volcanos, the places where the pre-Christian giants were buried, etc. In these places the Devil appears. It is said that in those places "they frighten", because the appearance of the Devil causes fright. Places where the ancient people became enchanted are called *encanto* (enchanted place), and this name is used for all places where the Devil appears regularly at a given hour when music is heard or a peculiar-looking animal is seen.

776 775 773 The distribution of souls between God and the Devil has been mentioned. As the Devil gets the wicked souls, that is, those who have sinned, his activities are directed towards provoking bad behavior and thus winning souls for himself. The Devil goes after drunkards. Wherever there are drunkards, there is the Devil. He induces people to drink by appearing to them in human form. Or he persecutes drunkards in order to take them to hell with him, or mixes among them in order to make them fight. Similarly the Devil tries to make everyone quarrel and fight. Experiences are told of how one, while drunk, saw the Devil or how an animal (i.e., the Devil) was seen leaving a place where there was a fight.

Another way of getting souls is for the Devil to take the form of a woman and go after men. Many men tell experiences of this type. Going to see a sweetheart during the night, the boy suddenly realizes she has hairy hands or goat's feet, or some other beastly attribute which makes him realize that it is the Devil he is with. Walking in the streets during the night, one sees a pretty woman and follows her, but at a certain movement sees some of her beast-like features. The Devil disguised as a woman tries to take the man out of town and take him to some ravine or cave in the woods which is the way to hell. To women, the Devil appears as a rich man (*catrín*) who marries the girl, which means taking her to hell.

In these experiences of drunkards or lovers, the victim prays when he realizes

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he is with the Devil. The Devil will leave him because of his prayers, or else will be unable to take the man with him because his intended victim has a relic of some saint.

Another way in which the Devil can get hold of a soul is by buying it. A man will pledge his soul (and sometimes also his children's) to the Devil in exchange for some gift, usually wealth or knowledge. This theme is one of the most common in Tarascan folklore (Tarascan, *pijɛ́akurin*, to make a pact with the Devil). Men most commonly sell their souls to the Devil in exchange for money. One meets the Devil, who is well dressed as a city dweller (*catrín*), and he promises to give money in exchange for the man's soul or that of one of his children. On the following night the man receives mules loaded with coins or he is taken to hell where he receives the money. In some cases, the man who has made a pact with
[825] the Devil receives an animal (Tarascan, *japíŋgua*), a sort of snake, which he keeps in a box and which excretes coins. Or else he receives a bull or sheep and then his animals grow very fast.

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This concept, that an animal may be given by the Devil, merges with that of the owner of the animals. Animals, in specific cases cattle and fish, are supposed to have a king or owner and if one gets hold of him, one can get as much of that species as one wants. This owner is also called *japíŋgua*. For some people it has no relation to the Devil. The owner of the fish is bigger than the common fish, swims at the head of the others and has a crown on its head. It can be seen but not caught. For many people, however, this japíŋgua is the Devil, and one can make a pact with him by which in exchange for his soul, the man will be lucky in fishing. Similarly, the japíŋgua of cattle is often spoken of as belonging to a rich man who has made a pact with the Devil.

Marrying a rich man also appears sometimes as a compact with the Devil.

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Other than those of wealth, most pacts with the Devil refer to witchcraft. Witchcraft is learned in this fashion: The novice has to go to a cave (usually taken there by another witch) where he (or more commonly she) has to spit on a Crucifix or perform some other sacrilegious act, finally meeting the Devil, who in exchange for his (her) soul gives the knowledge of witchcraft.

775 The evil dead who go to hell (or at least some of them) become devils or devil-like
776 spirits. This is an important concept in Tarascan folklore. We saw, for instance, how those people drowned in lakes or wells go to hell. Places where such accidents have happened are very dangerous because the drowned "pull people in, and cause canoes to capsize so that people drown". In some cases the water spirits died long ago in the past. They are mythical characters, like the three daughters of [773] the king of Tzintzuntzan, who were hidden in order not to see the blessing of the world; or the well spirits in the mountain towns, who discovered the springs but were plunged into the water by the people in the remote past. These spirits are called devils by informants, when asked about spirits' nature, and in some stories their devil-like attributes are clearly seen.

When a man has been murdered, a heap of stones is placed on the spot where the event took place. The stone on top of the head is marked with a cross and is called *krús ánimiri* (Tarascan from Spanish, cross of the soul). Anyone can put this soul to his service by getting hold of the cross. The cross is taken home and the soul haunts the house and scares intruders away. A soul's cross can be prayed to in order to ask the soul for help in getting a relative out of prison, or finding a lost animal.

778 The middle finger of a very brave dead man can also be used to put the soul at
775 one's service. The finger placed in front of a door has the virtue to open it, although one has to be brave enough to stand the sight of the dead man who appears on the door sill.

Many beliefs treat of hidden treasures. In one of these it is said that when a person wants to bury money to keep it secure, he kills a man or has one killed by somebody else and buries the dead man with his money. The dead man keeps the money, and frightens anybody who comes along. Only a very brave man could take the money out.

In the case of the soul's cross, the dead man's finger, or the dead man buried with money, it seems clear that we deal with the dead which do not reach their abode and are put to service by someone. In our material, however, this concept is not explicitly given. When asked about the nature of these dead persons, informants

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775 tend to identify them with devils or to
778 say that the Devil is behind all that.
Doomed evil souls can be invoked, too, in witchcraft. Thus, those who died in ac-
754 cidents or were murdered are prayed to
775 so that they will kill one's enemy. This takes place at the stone heap or in front of the cross, if it has been taken away. Also, in one formula for divination, the brave spirits are invoked, and two are mentioned in particular, those of Chavez García, a bandit, and Zapata (agrarista leader).

## Religious Ideology and Folklore as Expression of the Folk Culture

### A. Values Sanctioned in Ideology

128 An outline of Tarascan folklore and main religious concepts has been given in terms of the ideas of good and evil, which seem to pervade the entire body of belief. In order to discuss the social implications of this ideology, we shall sum up what is considered good or evil in all the elements which are mentioned in our collection. We shall do so from the point of view of evil elements since this is the exposition to which our material seems to lend itself more readily.

821 Harmful natural elements are considered bad and are related to the Devil.
776 They either are caused by him or are special manifestations of him. Thus the tornado is a water-snake, a devilish creature in itself. When the Devil wants to take some one away, he does so in this form. Similarly, a whirlwind is a lame devil, his limping explaining his circular motion.

Hail is equally bad and is closely connected with the idols or 'saints' of the heathens. The same association is found in some cases in lightning, although this shares also the good character of rain. The
[823] volcano was made by the Devil, as something bad which only he can do, even if following orders from God. When the volcano is personified, it is the same as the Devil.

183 The material which is of more interest to our subject, however, is not that referring to nature but to social behavior. An account of what is considered bad behavior will show what institutions and what social order are sanctioned by the Tarascan ideology.

For reasons of convenience, we classify the modes of behavior which are considered bad into (*a*) behavior against the mores of the whole population, and (*b*) be-

183 story, communal land is thus defended. The man who sold it against the community's interests is put out of the village and goes to live in the woods where he eats snakes and becomes insane. The rich are defended in the two stories about the dead who have to come back to earth in order to repay their masters. The landowner is clearly supported in one of them: the foreman who gave his master's corn to the peons has to come back to earth and sweat at the plow until he pays his master back. This punishment is intended not only to redeem his sin but also to enable him to tell the people "always to act as the master tells you."

Even poor peasants condemn land distribution as going against this principle, [775] and the agraristas as recipients of that land are doomed to hell; the burning place in hell is ready for them. The Devil wanders freely wherever they prevail. They are to blame for the volcano [823] (Paricutin) in a number of opinions, no matter what is the particular action that brings the whole thing about.

(2) Much material deals with the 183 wrongness of anything that is against the Church and organized religion, including 794 both the folk cult and orthodox Catholicism.

Taking cargos is considered necessary to reach heaven: "Vasco de Quiroga instructed us to take cargos in order to reach salvation; it is a work in this world in order to be able to go to heaven." "Cargos are to serve God." In Jarácuaro the cargueros wear a crown during processions and it is said that those who take no cargos have no crown, thereby diminishing their standing before God. In Tzintzuntan it is said that the carguero who does not participate in the Saturday processions has to do so after death.

The financial burden of cargos, discussed before, is reflected in the folk theme of the prospective carguero who sells his soul (or his daughter's) to the Devil in order to get money with which to finance the festival at his charge. In two of three cases [776] with this theme, the saints intervene to rescue the pledged soul.

[793] The priest is considered the representative of God and it is felt that he has to be obeyed.

688 Failure to fulfill obligations toward God
183 brings punishment. Adam and Eve are condemned to work. The man who refuses to give food to Saint Anthony disguised

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183 as a beggar loses his wealth. He who fails
688 to make a promised pilgrimage dies in an accident. The man who does not pay for the mass he promised Saint Francis is sent back to earth after his death so he will fulfill his pledge.

A number of cases refer to Carácuaro, a place in the Tierra Caliente the Tarascans visit very often, where a famous Christ is venerated. The pilgrim who gets tired on the road and gives up the trip remains behind enchanted on a mountain. The woman who complains about the heat and does not want to go on, and the dancers who danced before they reach the town are punished by being turned to stone.

The punishment of sacrilege is a common theme. The revolutionary colonel who beats the Christ of Carácuaro becomes very sick and cannot die until he asks for pardon. The landowner who tries to dissuade his peons from going to church is burned with his cigarette. The men building a movie house in Pátzcuaro where formerly a church stood are subject to fatal accidents. Sacrilegious behavior of the agraristas is the cause of God's sending the volcano to Parícutin. According to different stories, they destroy a cross, steal the Holy Host, or throw an image of Christ to a bull.

The blessing given by the church is essential. Everything which has not its
[778] approval (blessing) is bad: animals which have been created by the Devil and not by God or the saints, and which consequently have not been blessed — coyotes, snakes, the fish taken from a pool which has not been blessed; money coming from the Devil; and of course the non-baptized.

[773] The same theme occurs in myths. People
[172] who lived before the blessing of the world are bad; their ruins are haunted places and their idols are devils. Enchanted people are devils and have to be blessed by a priest before becoming normal beings.

Thus, Tarascan religious ideology and
183 folklore primarily sanction the values of
771 the folk culture. They support the family (understood in terms of local culture), attack witchcraft, defend private property and the proper observance of the folk religion. In their defense of poverty can be seen a defense of the Indian way of life. The money economy imposed from the outside is a disruptive influence in the village community, creating conflict within it or the loss of land to outsiders. The
●[776] Devil giving money always appears as a

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[776] well dressed non-Indian (*catrín*). The traditional sponsorship of religious festivals (*cargos*) also disrupts the social order in the villages because of their rôle in impoverishing the sponsors. The Devil steps in to get the carguero's soul by providing the money he needs to hold the festival. The folk value of cargos prevails, however, as the saint proceeds to save the carguero.

In so far as Tarascan religion is part of the national religion, a certain national social order and certain institutions are also supported. Adherence to the priest and to the dictates of the Church indicates such an endorsement of the church's national rôle and the social order which it supports. The moment there are anticlerical groups considered devilish because of their opposition to the Church, the whole weight of this body of belief is brought against them.

Similarly, defense of property, which in terms of local culture is defense of small property, can become support of a national order based on large property (as in the story defending the hacienda owner). Sanction of poverty can mean defense of the Indian way of life against intrusion, but viewed nationally, unequal distribution of wealth is sanctioned by virtue of poverty and the social order based on it.

Tarascan ideology, then, sanctions the traditional folk culture, but conflict with the outside is evident, and the fact that the folk culture is part of a wider society means that a certain national order is also sanctioned.

### B. SUPERNATURAL SANCTIONS IN SOCIAL CONFICT

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798 In previous chapters we have examined the agrarista movement and its anticlerical character. This anticlericalism resulted on the one hand in the agrarista's connection with the national anticlerical government from which he expected to receive lands, and in the opposition met in the Church itself, which was nationally opposed to the agrarian reforms. On the other hand, the main local cause for the agrarista anticlericalism was the cargo system for the local cult organization, which exacted too much from the Indians and was in many cases responsible for the loss of their lands.

We also gave the reasons for opposition to the agraristas and for their decline in villages where small landowners prevailed, and the following success of the Catholic reaction. Within this reaction the trend

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668 against the traditional cargo system is again discernible, although this time under 798 the cloak of a more orthodox Catholicism. Thus people are divided according to their appreciation of some cultural institution: for cargos (traditionalist) or against them (agraristas and some militant Catholics); for the Church (traditionalists and militant Catholics) or aganist it (agraristas).

Since the ethical religious ideology sanctions those institutions thus in conflict, let us see how supernatural sanction of political groups is evidenced in folk narratives.

Corresponding to the general anti-agra- 183 rista trend, we find in the tales use of the good and evil theme in order to prove the 668 wickedness of the agraristas. A number of experiences in which people see the Devil take place in towns where the agraristas dominate, doubtless a reflection of the connection between the two evils.

At the time of our stay in Jarácuaro, the level of the lake was falling, leaving considerable extensions of land dry. At that time in Ihuatzio, which is strongly Catholic, an agrarista group was formed to get this land for themselves instead of sharing it with the whole town. News soon reached Jarácuaro that the Devil had been seen in Ihuatzio. The following market day in Pátzcuaro brought more complete news:

[539] [776] "In Ihuatzio they saw the Devil. He came out of the mountains and he crossed the town through the center. He looked like a human, but had feet like those of donkeys. The people wanted to hit him, but they were not able to reach him. They say he came out because many have now become agraristas. In order to get the land at the lakeshore the town has split."

A similar story is told of another town:

539 "This is what happened to a man from Tócuaro when agrarismo was so powerful. This man remembered an errand he had to do at Pichátaro and he left; this was about eleven o'clock at night. He went down right to the road and there he saw a man on horseback. They greeted each other: 'Good evening.' 'Good evening.' 'Where are you going?' 'To Pichátaro.' 'I am going to Puácuaro. Shall we travel together?' 'All right. Let's go.'

"'Where do you come from?' the stranger asked. 'I come from Tócuaro, and you?' 'Well, I am here and there, sometimes in Tzurumútaro, sometimes in San Pedro, San Bartolo or Puácuaro; those are the towns where they like me best.' 'And what about Tócuaro?' 'No, you don't like me at all; you have there an old

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539 man who does not let me in.' [This is Saint Francis.] And the man from Tócuaro did not realize whom he was talking with. So they arrived at Arócutin where their roads separated and the stranger asked: 'Don't you want a cigarette?' 'Yes.' 'Here it is.' And when he lit the cigarette the man from Tócuaro saw his eyes which seemed to be burning, so bright they were. He threw the cigarette away and left. He had only walked a few steps when fright caught him. His hands and feet were sweating and he left the road and spent the night in the open. He did not arrive at Pichátaro until the next day and then he told what had happened to him."

668 776 San Bartolo, San Pedro, Tzurumútaro and Puácuaro are agrarista towns on the lakeshore; the Devil is welcome there. In Tócuaro, however, they are not agraristas; they follow their patron saint (Saint Francis), and the Devil cannot get in.

Similarly, in Tzurumútaro, another agrarista town, "there appeared an old woman who used to talk to men on the street corners. When she left she went to a ravine. She was a devil."

In Huecorio 'the Enemy' (euphemism for the Devil) came out one night roaring like a bull. The dogs went after him and he became a black dog dragging something like a long skin. He appeared one night after the church had been blessed and mass had been said for the first time. This was three years ago (i. e., 1942).

Agraristas are also mentioned in an experience of a man who, having come back to life after being dead for a few hours, reports having seen in hell the place prepared for burning the agraristas working the land in Copujo, Jarácuaro.

In one incantation, the spirits of the agrarista leader, Zapata, and the revolutionary bandit, Chávez García, are mentioned as bad spirits whose help is asked: "You brave spirits, which are now in the other life. Now, in this moment, come to me. You, spirits of Chávez García and Zapata."

In the following story, the supporter of the Church is miraculously saved from the agraristas:

539 "At the time when the priests were being persecuted, there was a man who defended the church very much. Nobody did anything to him; he was not burned nor anything. The agraristas put him in jail. He had spent three days in jail, and they wanted to convince him that if he would go on defending the Church

771 is seen not only in their behavior but also
668 in the fact that their ideas about cargos
are changing. Whereas for the traditional-
ist, cargos are a necessary service to God
[782] in order to reach heaven, some Catholics
oppose this idea. They say it is only
custom, an unnecessary expenditure of
money, not required to be a good Catholic,
and they are supported by the priest.
When discussing this point, Manuel has a
ready argument: "Do you have cargos in
Mexico City? You don't have them
there, but people are still good Catholics."

[783] Myths and experiences with the super-
natural are usually believed, and some-
times even wonder stories, but the attitude
of doubt described before is also found.

Although agraristas or radicals dismiss folk beliefs as superstitions, the prevalent pattern by which folk beliefs disappear is not through lack of belief but by some sort of explanation within the accepted ideology as to why behavior based on the disappearing belief is not found any more. Thus we see in belief the same trend as in the cult, where the tendency is toward a more orthodox Catholicism. Examples follow:

539 In Zopoco there are no rich men because the town Christ "does not allow the *japingua* to operate", *i. e.*, compacts with the Devil.

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754 Jarácuaro used to be famous as a center of
778 witchcraft. Prospective witches entered a cave
behind the Church to make a compact with
538 the Devil and learn their art. The present lack
of witches is attributed to the fact that the
entrance to the cave has been covered: "Form-
erly there were witches because God allowed
it. Now he stopped it. What there are now are
some magicians who learn in books, but God
does not allow many of them. Otherwise with
so many books as there are, there would be
many magicians and all of them would be
causing evil."

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● 776 Elves are no longer seen because the Pope
539 condemned them together with other devils to
go back to hell; and they have not been seen
thereafter.

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821 In Cocucho there were many thunderstorms
539 over a certain mountain. "A priest went and
blessed a cave in the mountain. A thunder-
783 storm destroyed the cave. They said many
people were seen leaving the mountain; they

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nation and its princes. This account forms the principal part of the *Relación* and refers to the marvels of creation performed by their god, Curicaueri. The miracles of the creation are told in the countryside between Lake Pátzcuaro and Lake Cuitzeo as the tale of the birth of Cueróhperi.

### The Legend

In the beginning of time there was no light. The silent dwelling place of Curicaueri, the only god at that time, was full of minute (atómica) material which slowly moved around without any order or harmony. Curicaueri realized that his enormous circular eyes could not penetrate the darkness nor contemplate infinity; therefore he created four orbs of light, each burning in one of the cardinal points of the universe, and light existed.

Great shapeless masses from the depths now were reflected in the eyes of the powerful god. From some of the mass, Curicaueri created Huriata, the sun god, naming him father and overseer of the universe. Then Huriata formed the heavenly bodies, ordering that they light the heavens in their own manner.

Thus day and night came into the world.

Through his golden mask Curicaueri smiled upon seeing the light of the four orbs, and, viewing the orderliness which Huriata had given to the universe, he desired to reward Huriata. Thus he created the moon goddess, Cutzi, and presented her to Huriata to take as his wife.

The contact of the two – Father Sun and the Mother Moon – brought darkness to the cosmos. From the two joined bodies, three rays of light broke forth upon the firmament to form three concentric circles around the dusky body of Cutzi.

From the three circles was born Cueróhperi (the creative principle or Mother Nature), the daughter whom Father Sun endowed with beauty and wisdom.

The three rays of light were extended through space, and they caused colors to be reflected from the heavenly bodies and the organized atoms.

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## SESIHÁNGARI

### Historical Comment

By the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Tarascan kingdom extended into the present states of Jalisco, Colima, and Guerrero, and thereby reached its greatest limits of expansion. King Zuangua (called Singuangua in the following legend of Sesihángari) ruled over this vast area not only as the highest political authority but also as the representative and incarnation of the primordial god Curicaueri. Thus he had the twofold responsibility of ruling the country and maintaining the cult of the god.

In respect to this latter duty, the king had a woman known as the *quataperi* who supervised all the women of the royal household, including the group comprised of daughters of important men of the empire. These women passed their days preparing items to be used as offerings to the god and were permitted to leave the royal enclosure only at the time of fiestas.

The story of one of these young women is a Tarascan tradition that was carefully and secretly transmitted from generation to generation, never being disclosed to outsiders until the wars of revolution in the early nineteenth century. At that time it became known when the Indians openly applauded the noble virtues displayed by Sesihángari in the face of adversity. As thousands of their countrymen fell into more desperate circumstances, this legend was popularized. Sesihángari's acceptance of death for that which she held dear in the face of evil oppression became a staunch subject of reference for the nineteenth-century Indian revolutionaries.

### The Legend

Sesihángari, the strikingly beautiful daughter of the cacique of Patamban, was brought to the Purépecha court. Upon her arrival in the royal city of Tzintzuntzan, the ladies of the court crowned her with flowers on the steps of the palace and dressed her in a